

# Devotional Studies

## Self-Examination of One's Relationship to Christ

Paul writes to the Corinthians about their relationship to Christ. This admonition is still as relevant today as it was in the first century. Many profess faith in Christ, but, at the same time, their actions indicate that something is missing in their perspective of what Christianity is all about. In this Epistle, Paul writes: "Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you—unless of course, you fail the test" (**2 Corinthians 13:5**)? This text invites every believer to look into his or her heart in order to determine what is in it. This examination is about "the faith," that is to say, it is about the message of salvation by grace through faith in the finished work of Christ upon the Cross. Paul is concerned as to whether or not the Corinthians have fully understood the preaching of the Cross. Today, this same question confronts every believer. How many Christians have understood the preaching of the Cross? How many believers have made this message of the Cross foremost in their lives?

Paul wants to know if the preaching of the Cross has just reached their minds or if it has pierced their hearts. In this short text, he not only wants Christ to apprehend the Corinthians, but he wants them to apprehend Christ. God apprehended them through the message of the Cross, but some, apparently, did not apprehend Him? In other words, Paul wants God's sovereignty to infect every believer. He wants God to be Lord of everyone's life. As Christians today reflect upon **2 Corinthians 13:5**, each one should inquire as to what his or her faith is all about.

What does this Scripture convey to the people of God today? Does believing make a difference in your life? Are you the same with or without your belief in the message of salvation? When one professes faith in Christ, the world expects differences in one's life that separates him or her from those who do not believe in Christ. It is in this vein that Paul writes to the Corinthians. The Corinthians were constrained to give some kind of account for their behavior. How is your behavior? Are you still happy about your faith. Are your hearts glad about God's revelation of Himself in and through Jesus? Is this joy now foreign to you? Have you lost your first love? If so, your faith is not very deep. Is your faith just lodged in your understanding and not in your heart? Paul wants faith in Christ to penetrate into one's heart. Is there gratitude in your heart for spiritual things? What about Sunday gatherings? Do you relish your time together with other saints or do you resent the time spent on Sundays in praising God within the corporate body of Christ? Paul writes to the Colossians about this very issue of one's attitude toward spiritual things:

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. <sup>16</sup> Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. <sup>17</sup> And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. (**Colossians 3:15-17**)

When one praises God, something else stands out in one's life, that is, God's omnipotence, His Holiness, His majesty, and His greatness. As one reflects upon God, one ought to be caught up in wonder and struck with awe and bow in adoration for His love for lost humanity. Do the pleasures of life take priority over God? Is God first in your life? Do you desire to serve God more than to enjoy the pleasures of life or the pleasures of sin for a season? Paul, in the Philippian Epistle, sets forth his own examination about his own faith in Christ. Listen to Paul as he opens his heart to the Philippians:

But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. <sup>8</sup> What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ <sup>9</sup> and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. <sup>10</sup> I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, <sup>11</sup> and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead. (**Philippians 3:7-11**)

The primary vocation of the Christian life is the same for all believers, not just the preacher in the pulpit. Christians are here in the world to love God and to love one's neighbor. They are here to serve God. The Christian life is a vocation that is to be woven into the very fabric of one's being. Paul writes to the Romans: "If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord" (**Romans 14:8**). Do you believe this Scripture? Many Christians today live as if they are their own masters. Christians today fail in the purpose of their lives because they love the world more than they love God. Is Jesus the center and heart of your faith? If God is not foremost in one's life, one wonders how anyone can effectively reach out to others. Do you believe in the resurrection of the dead and in the life of the world to come? If so, why not examine yourself to see if you are in the faith?